



USAID | PHILIPPINES

SUCCESS STORY

CONGRESSIONAL INTERNSHIP PROGRAM: Shaping Future Muslim Leaders



"I know now that in order to effect change through Congress, we have to master legislative language."
--Norodin Ambolodto, 26, intern

"We see on our field visits how successful local governments are able to raise tax revenues. If they can do it, then so can others in our area."
--Cairon Ali, 22, intern

"It's a chance to work with Filipinos from other places and denominations. Through our interaction we find common ground."
--Moh. Alih Samsa, 27, intern

Due to decades of conflict on the island of Mindanao, only very few young Muslim professionals have had the opportunity to develop the skills needed to shape public policy.

Many young Muslims from conflict-affected areas in Central and Western Mindanao are committed to sustaining the peace through democratic processes and want to learn more about how governments convert policy into legislation.

To help bring this about, a Congressional internship program was established by USAID and the House of Representatives of the Philippines to enable future Muslim leaders to acquire practical knowledge, skills and perspectives on public policy making and on national and local governance systems.

The Congressional Internship Program for Young Muslim Leaders (CIPYML) is a partnership between the Philippine House of Representatives, Mindanao State University, and USAID's Growth with Equity in Mindanao (GEM) Program. Some 30-40 interns are selected each year to undergo the 4-month internship program.

The competitively selected interns immerse themselves in the process of legislation-based policy formulation and project implementation. They work with various Congressional committees on specific policy interests and also participate in special training programs and field visits to local governments and Cabinet agencies. The interns interact regularly with members of the House of Representatives and officials, which gives them a chance to serve as advocates for their region and develop an informal network of contacts for the future.

"I realize now that problems in our region are not always addressed at the national level because they aren't well understood," says intern Isman Abdurahman. "On our visits to government agencies, we take the opportunity to clarify the situation for them." Adds Mohammad Alih Samsa, another intern: "Learning has turned out to be a two-way process." Since governments at all levels in the predominantly Muslim areas lack skilled policy designers and implementers these interns can be an important resource for policy development and effective governance.